

# IOWA CHILD ADVOCACY BOARD



## FISCAL YEAR 2004 ANNUAL REPORT

(July 1, 2003 - June 30, 2004)

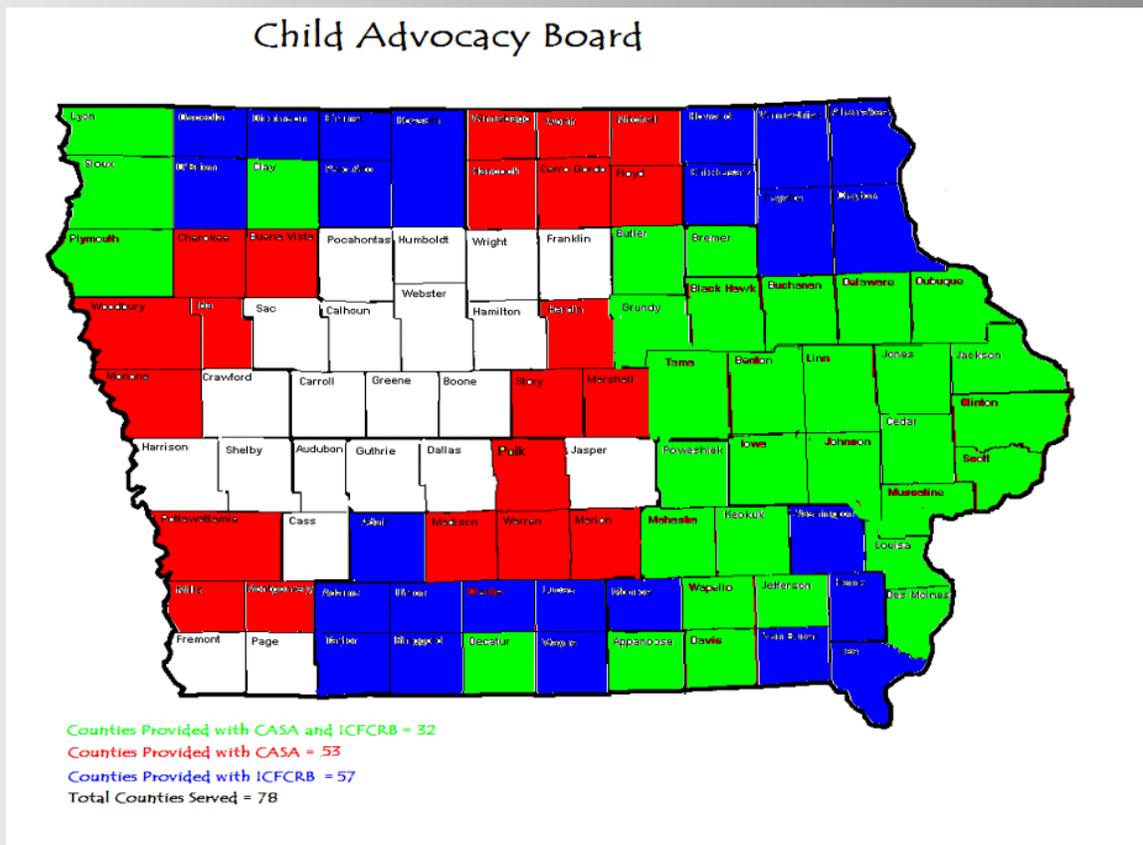
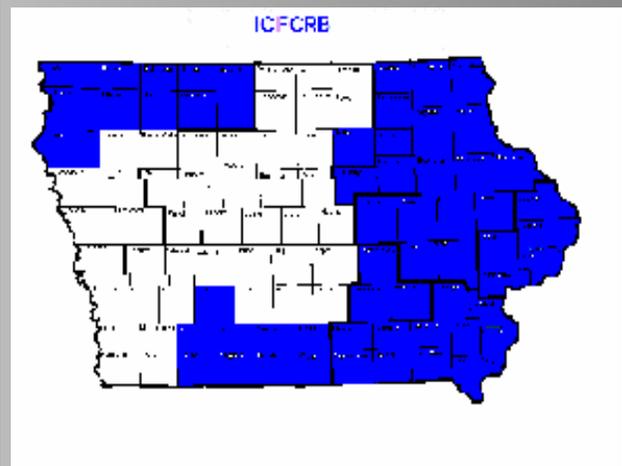
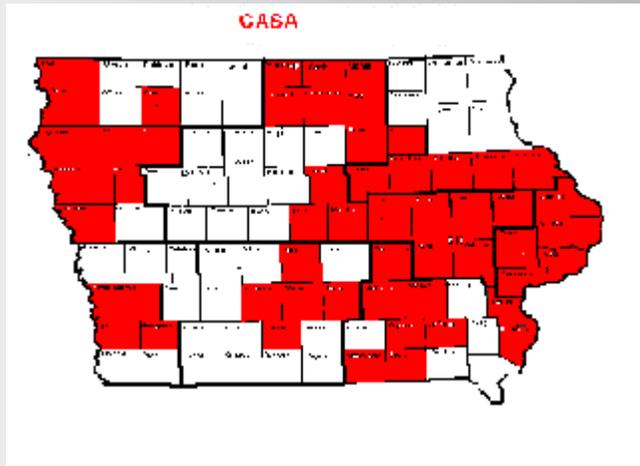
Iowa Child Advocacy Board  
321 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0083  
(515) 281-7621  
Toll Free: (866) 448-4608  
[www.state.ia.us/government/dia/CAB.html](http://www.state.ia.us/government/dia/CAB.html)

**The State Board:** The Iowa Child Advocacy Board is an independent board in the Executive Branch, composed of a nine-member board of volunteers, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Iowa Senate. The State Board operates two volunteer child advocacy programs: the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program and the Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Board (ICFCRB) program. The State Board establishes policies and procedures and is responsible for ensuring adequate funding and staff to support the work of the community volunteers for both programs. The State Board is also charged with ensuring that both programs are in compliance with the Iowa Code, which provides the legal basis for citizen involvement in child welfare issues.

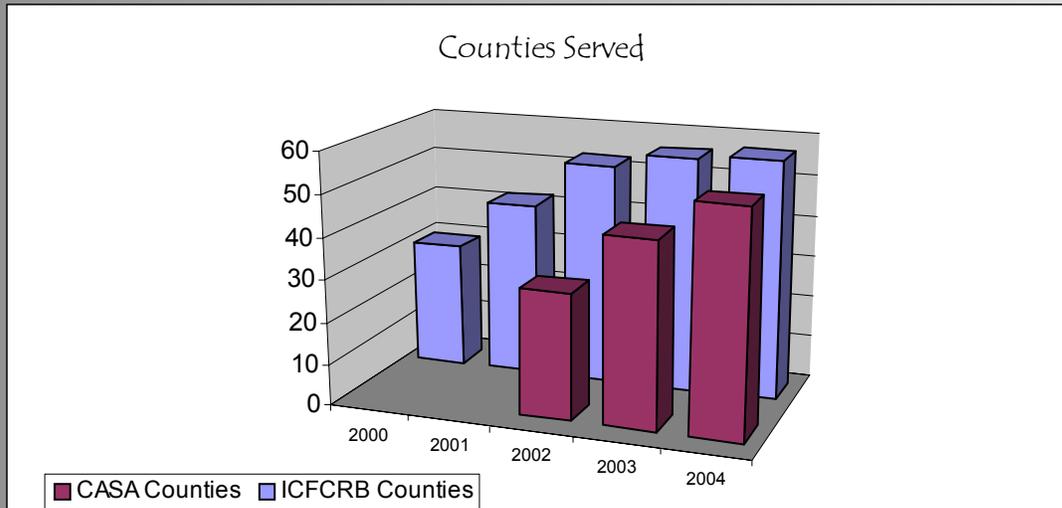
**CASA:** *History:* The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program was created in 1986 by the Iowa Supreme Court as a special program of the Judicial Branch. Effective July 1, 2002 (FY 2003) the program was moved to the Executive Branch under the control of the Child Advocacy Board. *Our Mission:* The Iowa Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program commissions community volunteers to serve as an effective voice in court for abused and neglected children, strengthening efforts to ensure that each child is living in a safe, permanent and nurturing home. *Role:* CASA volunteers are appointed by the Court to advocate for a specific abused or neglected child. The CASA volunteer serves many roles in a child's court case, including investigation, assessment, facilitation, advocacy, and monitoring.

**ICFCRB:** *History:* The Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Board was created by the Iowa Legislature in 1984 to ensure that planning for permanency would occur for all of Iowa's children. *Our Mission:* The Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Board empowers the citizens of Iowa to review cases, collect data, and recommend changes to promote the safety and permanency of children who have been removed from the homes of their families. *Role:* ICFCRB volunteers are appointed by the Court to serve on a local, community board that conducts a review of the case of each child in out-of-home placement in their community once every six months. The ICFCRB volunteers make specific findings and recommendations as to the individual case as well as systemic findings and recommendations for Iowa's child welfare system.

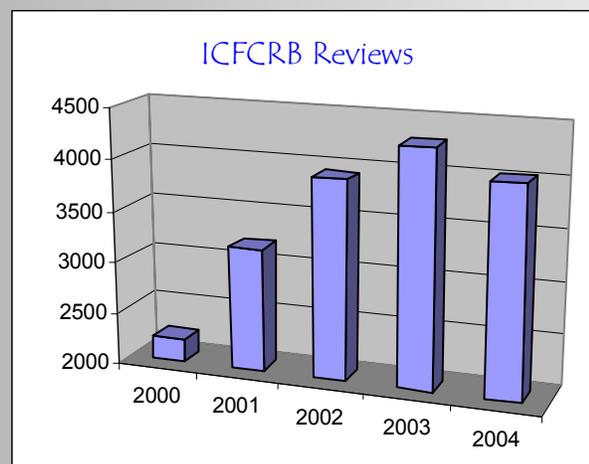
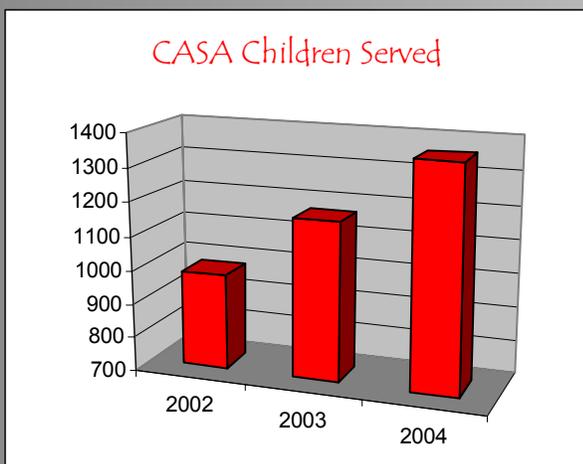
**Program Coverage:** By the end of FY 2004, the CASA program was established in 53 counties and the ICFCRB program was operating in 57 counties. The following maps show the location of each program:



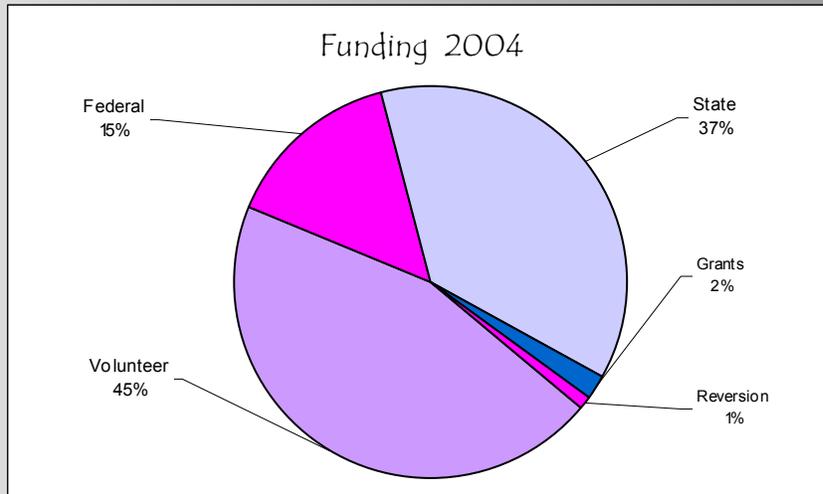
**Program Expansion:** In spite of tough economic times and resultant budget cuts, both programs operated by the Iowa Child Advocacy Board have expanded their program coverage and service of abused and neglected children. This has included increasing the number of counties where the programs operate as well as the number of children served.



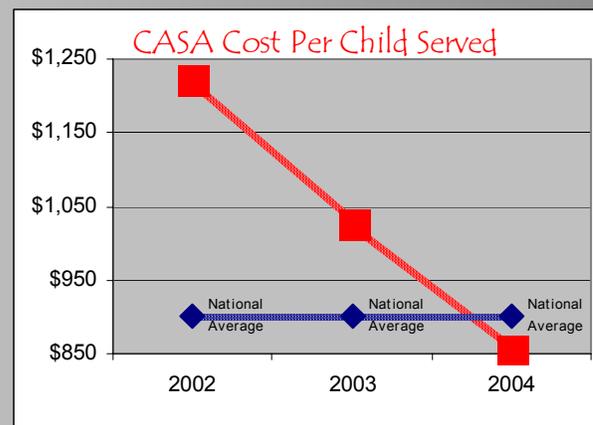
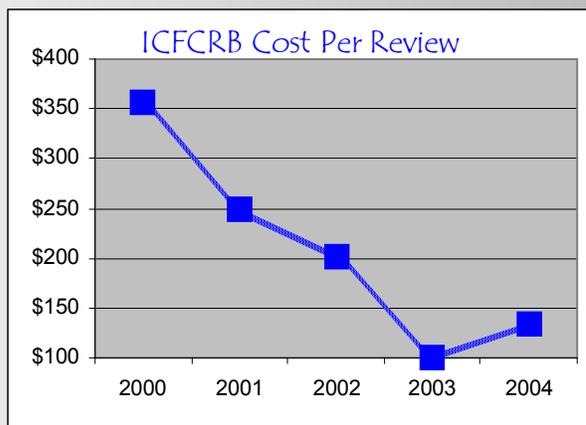
Both programs served a record or near record number of children in FY 2004. CASA served a record 1,360 children and ICFCRB conducted a near record 4,026 reviews during FY 2004.



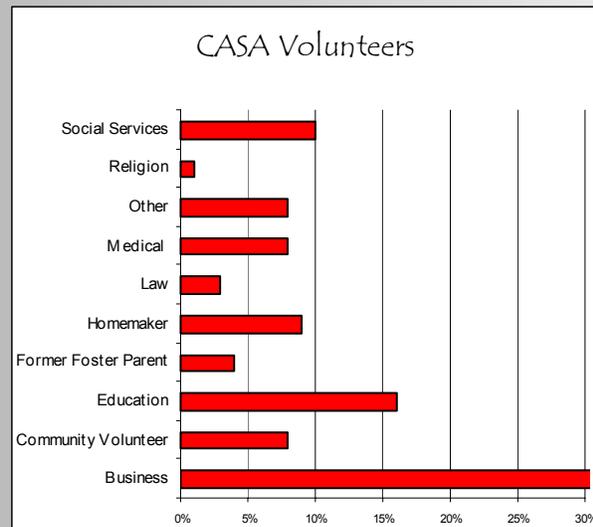
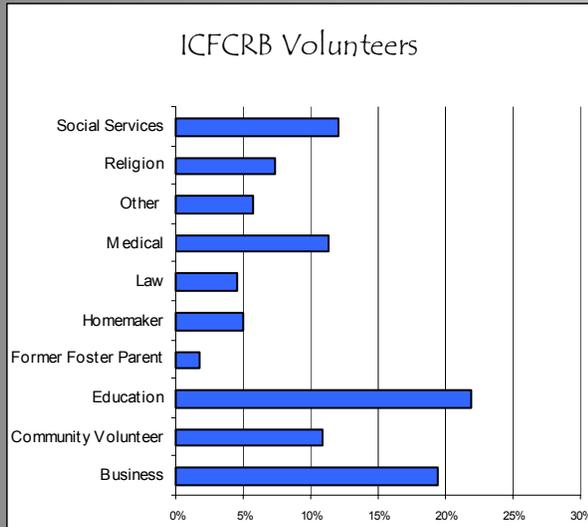
**Program Funding:** Both programs operated by the Iowa Child Advocacy Board receive state funding and a great deal of volunteer support. The ICFCRB program also receives substantial federal funding. The following chart shows the funding sources for the two programs:



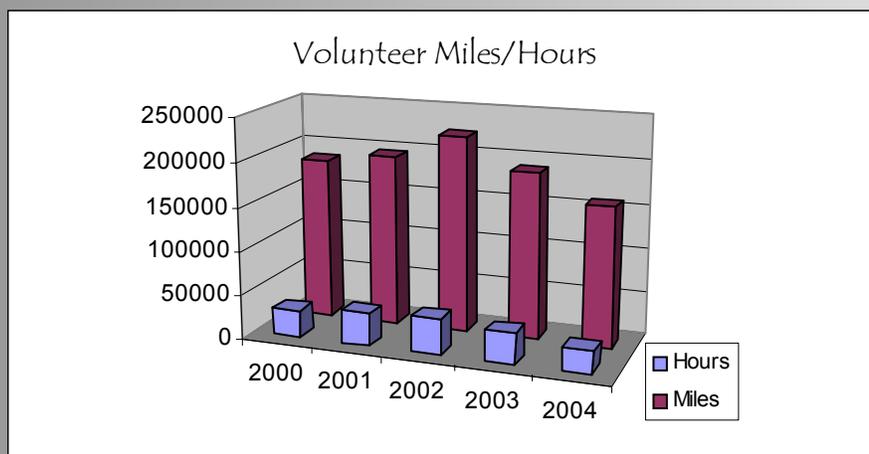
During the past four years, the Child Advocacy Board has reduced the cost in state dollars per review conducted by the ICFCRB program from \$357 per review to \$133 per review, a reduction of 63%. During the past two years, the Child Advocacy Board has reduced the cost in state dollars per child served by the CASA program from \$1,223 per child served to \$855 per child served, a reduction of 30%. The year before the Board assumed operation of the program, the cost per child served for Iowa CASA exceeded the national average by 35%. After only 2 years, the cost per child served by Iowa CASA was 5% less than the national average.



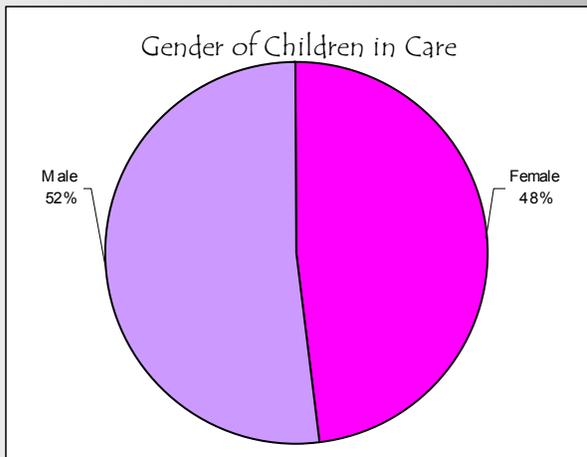
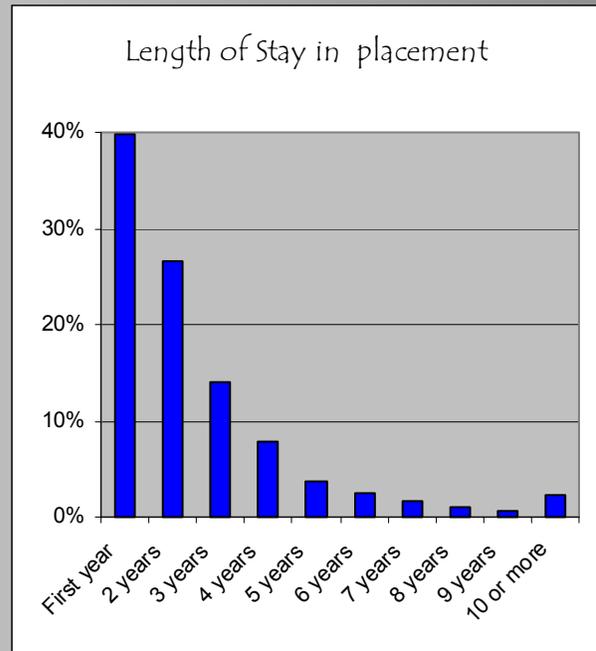
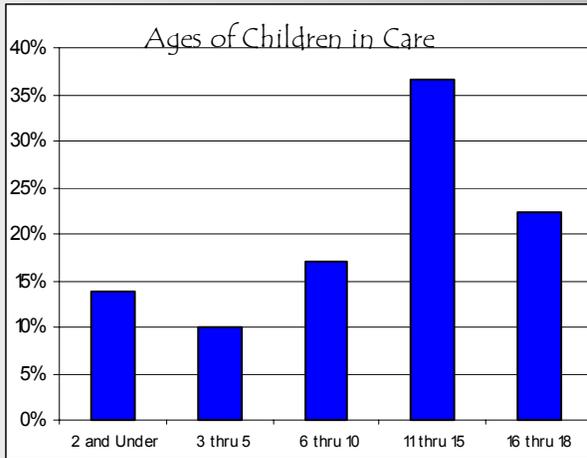
**Volunteer Profiles:** Both the CASA program and the ICFCRB program have an outstanding corps of volunteers. At the end of FY 2004, there were a total of 515 active CASA volunteers and a total of 319 active ICFCRB volunteers. The backgrounds of the volunteers for each program are illustrated as follows:



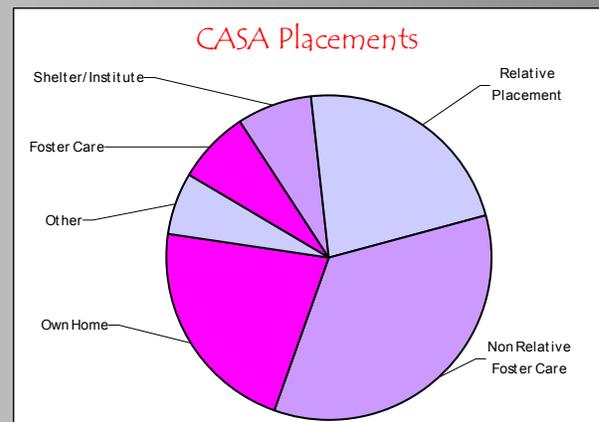
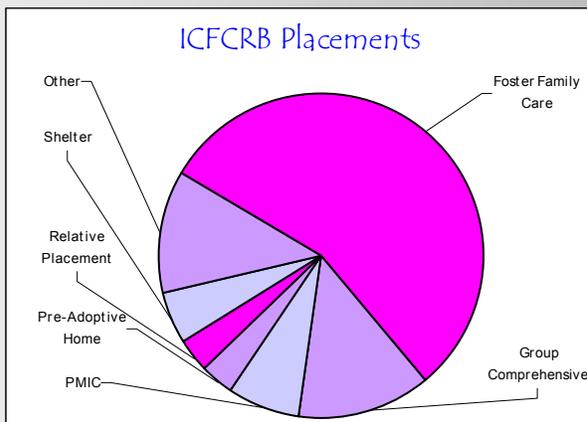
**Volunteer Contributions:** Both programs operated by the Child Advocacy Board depend upon the volunteer efforts of citizens throughout the State of Iowa. During FY 2004, the volunteers for the ICFCRB program donated to the State a total of 25,774 hours and 40,100 miles toward the success of the program. These hours and miles are valued at \$810,939. During FY 2004, the volunteers for the CASA program donated to the State a total of 25,382 hours and 158,431 miles toward the success of the program. These hours and miles are valued at \$1,328,461. Therefore, during FY 2004 alone, volunteers made a total contribution to the programs of the Child Advocacy Board valued at \$2,139,400.



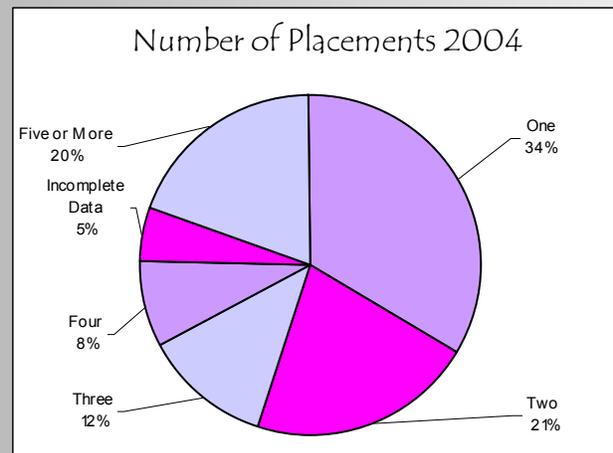
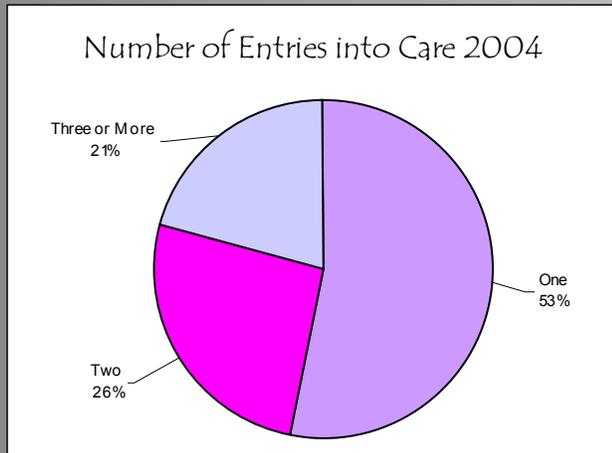
**Children Served:** Because the ICFCRB program reviews the cases of all children in care, the age and gender of the children served by that program is indicative of the children in out-of-home placement:



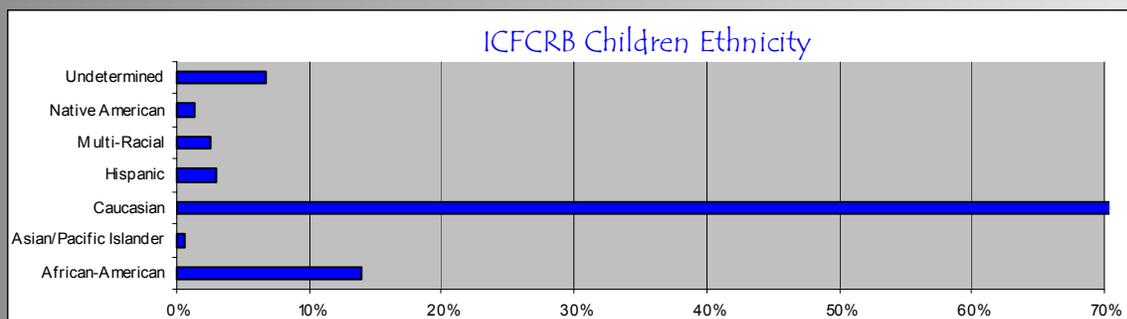
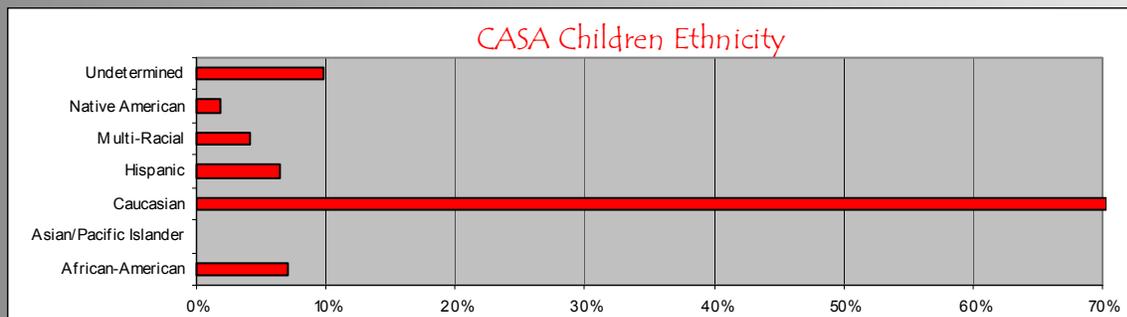
The CASA program serves a substantial number of children who have not been removed from the homes of their families, while the ICFCRB volunteers only review the cases of children in out-of-home placement. Placement type for the children served, consequently, varies for the two programs:



**Number of Entries into Care:** For the children in out-of home placement, the ICFCRB program measures both the number of times children in care have entered Iowa's child welfare system as well as the number of placements that the children have experienced. The data for FY 2004 shows the following:



**Ethnicity of Children in Care:** Both programs monitor the racial background of the children served. The ICFCRB data is reflective of all of the children in care in the areas served. The ethnicity of the children served by the CASA program is fairly close to the same as the ethnicity of the children in care as tabulated by the ICFCRB program. The data for FY 2004 shows the following:



# FINDINGS

During FY 2004, the 834 volunteers of the Child Advocacy Board, combined, spent a total of 51,156 hours working with Iowa's child welfare system and advocating for abused and neglected children involved in that system. Based upon those experiences, the Iowa Child Advocacy Board makes the following **FINDINGS** :

- Funding for Iowa's child welfare system has been steadily reduced resulting in a reduction of services being made available to Iowa's most vulnerable children and families. This has resulted in a virtual elimination of funding for preventive services. Iowa is putting its future at risk by failing to meet these needs.
- More and more of the families involved with the child welfare system are struggling with significant substance abuse problems. Funding for substance abuse treatment has not kept pace with the increase in need for such treatment, allowing these families to spiral further into the cycle of abuse and neglect.
- There is a significant gap in the recognition by Iowa's citizens of the number of families seriously struggling with abuse and neglect in the state, resulting in a public denial of the need for attention to these families and children.
- Courts in rural counties of the state continue to use the antiquated practice of scheduling numerous juvenile court hearings for the same time, resulting in an inordinate amount of time wasted as parents, foster parents, children, lawyers, providers and social workers wait for a relatively short hearing. This creates unnecessary burdens on an already over-burdened system.
- The quality of representation of children by court-appointed attorneys continues to vary greatly, ranging from outstanding to virtually non-existent. This variance results in greatly unequal levels of protections for children involved with Iowa's child welfare system.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations to the Iowa Legislature:

- Increase funding for Iowa's child welfare system, with an emphasis on funding for preventive services.
- Enact legislation gradually increasing the funding for substance abuse treatment programs. Furthermore, enact legislation providing that, whenever court orders for substance abuse treatment are entered by any court in any matter, persons subject to such orders for treatment who are parents of minor children shall be advanced to the beginning of any waiting list for treatment.
- When state revenues improve, increase funding of the CASA and ICFCRB programs, with an eye towards statewide expansion to maximize community understanding, ownership, and involvement in providing safety and permanency for Iowa's most vulnerable citizens.

## Recommendations to the Iowa Supreme Court:

- Implement rule changes to ensure that attorneys appointed to represent children in juvenile matters are held accountable for meeting the mandatory requirements for guardian ad litem already set forth in the Iowa Code.
- Prohibit the practice of scheduling numerous juvenile court hearings for the same date and time on the court calendar and require that all juvenile hearings be set for a separate time approximating, as far as is reasonably possible, the time when the hearing will actually occur.

## Recommendations to the Iowa Department of Human Services:

- Realign fiscal resources in such a way as to make preventive services a priority for Iowa's children and families, including procuring necessary federal waivers to allow a reallocation of federal funding to preventive services.
- Assemble information for policy makers as to the number of families in Iowa's child welfare system with significant substance abuse problems and the average delay in the provision of substance abuse treatment services.